



CLEAN WATER ACTION

645 Farmington Avenue, Hartford CT 06105

Written Testimony of Sarah Uhl, Environmental Health Coordinator
On behalf of Clean Water Action
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee, March 1, 2010

**Testimony in Support of HB 5130 "AAC Child Safe Products" and
HB 5126 "AA Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of
Connecticut"**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of House Bills 5130 and 5126. My name is Sarah Uhl, and I am the Environmental Health Coordinator for Clean Water Action in Connecticut. Clean Water Action is a non-profit organization with one million members nationwide and over 20,000 members in Connecticut. Our Hartford-based staff works with local groups and citizen leaders around the state on issues affecting our health, environment, and quality of life.

Clean Water Action sincerely appreciates the Environment Committee's leadership on environmental health issues. Connecticut has received national recognition for leading the way toward safer consumer products and fewer toxic chemicals, and the two bills on which I provide testimony today would set us on a path toward comprehensive solutions. Please refer to the testimony of the Connecticut Public Health Association and Connecticut Nurses' Association for information about the problem of toxic chemicals, or visit <http://healthreport.saferchemicals.org/>.

House Bill 5130 would phase out the most toxic substances from children's products. The bill would make Connecticut one of four states that are implementing modernized, health-protective approaches to chemicals management (the others being Maine, Washington, and California). It would enable the Connecticut DEP to adopt and annually amend a list of priority chemicals of high concern that would then be slowly phased out of products for our most vulnerable residents: children. Chemicals on the list for more than a few years would be phased out of children's products unless the manufacturer received a time-limited waiver from the Department of Consumer Protection due to a lack of alternatives. Maine and Washington are in the final stages of publishing well-synchronized lists of this type. Both states have already produced larger "Chemicals of High Concern" lists, which identify more than 1,400 of the most toxic chemicals currently allowed in consumer products. Maine's Chemicals of High Concern List can be found here: <http://www.maine.gov/dep/oc/safechem/highconcern/>

Maine's short list of the most toxic chemicals in children's products is expected to be published in the next 5-6 months. Washington's Department of Ecology has also published a draft list of 66 chemicals of concern in children's products. Manufacturers will be required to report to the state if their products contain any of these chemicals:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/cspa/pdf/ChemicalReportingList.pdf>

Since Connecticut has access to these lists and the rationales and scientific evidence used by the toxicologists who produced them, our state agencies could easily move forward with selecting some of the most dangerous chemicals that are found in children's products. The Connecticut DEP already participates in the Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse, which is in the final stages of developing an on-line "wiki" to house and organize lists of toxic chemicals generated by authoritative government bodies in the U.S. and around the world. We can capitalize on the research that has already been done and move forward with a process that would help reduce the need for individual bills to ban specific chemicals each year.

Although the DEP participates in the Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse, Clean Water Action recognizes that it may be more appropriate for the Department of Public Health to be the lead agency for the adoption of a Priority Chemicals of High Concern List, in consultation with the DEP. The Department of Public Health has toxicologists on staff familiar with the listing processes of other states and the efforts of the Interstate Clearinghouse, and so might be a better home for this part of the legislation.

House Bill 5126 would establish a **Chemical Innovations Institute** to foster green job growth, promote safe workplaces, and reduce the use of toxic chemicals. The bill would establish the mission and Board of Directors of the Institute, and enable fundraising and fee-for-service activities without requiring the State to put forth any money. With increasingly stringent chemical regulations being implemented in other countries, we see this as an economic development opportunity to make Connecticut a leader on green chemistry innovation and clean technologies. Along with the Interstate Clearinghouse, a Chemical Innovations Institute would give Connecticut access to cutting-edge safer alternatives information from other states and around the world, so that we grow a safer and stronger state economy.

The Institute would:

- Keep businesses up-to-date on international and national chemical policy changes, which would help with compliance and ensure access to international markets for Connecticut-manufactured products
- Train businesses in evaluating chemicals for safer alternatives, which would help businesses market products as green and avoid public embarrassment from having toxics in consumer products
- Increase the use of safer alternatives that protect workers, consumers, and the environment

The Institute would also be able to work collaboratively with the Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI) in MA, which focuses on safer alternatives to cleaning chemicals and solvents, and New York's Pollution Prevention Program, headquartered at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Connecticut's Institute could work with the business community to identify a key area of chemical usage on which to focus that would complement rather than duplicate efforts in our neighboring states.

Substituting safer alternatives for toxins can also help businesses save money through reduced worker compensation, OSHA compliance costs and hazardous waste disposal fees. Within 10 years of starting, TURI helped Massachusetts industry save \$14 million while reducing the use of toxic chemicals by 40%, byproduct waste by 58%, and toxic emissions by 80% (Thorpe and Rossi, 2005).

Clean Water Action strongly supports this legislation because it would help make fundraising efforts for the Institute more successful. Contributions from private foundations, federal grant programs, individuals and corporations could be pooled to fund the Institute's operations. If adequate funds were not available, the University of Connecticut would not have any obligation to establish or maintain the functions of the Institute.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of House Bills 5130 and 5126.

Sincerely,



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Thorpe, Beverly and Rossi, Mark. (2005) Background Paper #1: Require Safer Substitutions and Solutions. Louisville Charter for safer chemicals. <http://www.louisvillecharter.org/paper.substitutes.shtml>